

MR. Fagone,

I must admit that it took me by surprise to get a letter from you. Not many people are interested in the fact that multitudes of inmates kill themselves in solitary confinement every year. The daily levels of stress and misery can cause even the strongest of individuals to see death as a logical solution to their problems. Being mentally ill does contribute to the amounts of suicides each day.

The information you received about me was accurate. I was Hector Martinez' neighbor. (was located in the cell right next to him). He was in cell 211 and I was in 212. I am also the only inmate who actually seen his body laying on the floor with a make-shift nuse tied around his neck. I was pulled out for a shower and I am the one who looked in the cell and informed the officer's to push their alarm to alert an emergency. The incident still has a profound affect on me. Before I go any further and explain exactly what happened, I want you to know that I am not going to give you a "Pro-inmate" biased account - I want Hector's family to know what happened to him on his last days here on earth - that's all. I know my family would want to know answers to what happened to me. So I am going to just give an account to the TRUTH. So you can get an accurate account of what is happening in here. Also, I will give you my personal experiences of the "Guard one checks" and also my own personal experiences of suicide attempts. I hope all this will help to bring some change to a system that is desperately flawed.

First of all, blame should not be directed at the men and women of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The staff that works in the P.S.U. units are under constant assault and distress. They face the daily challenges of dealing with all sorts of troubling incidences that are part of the fabric of these institutions. I applaud their efforts and do not

envy the position they are in one bit! Let me explain - Inmates in these units do something to the custody staff is here called "Gassing". It's when a inmate takes a mixture of Feces and Urine and throws it at them. This happens daily to these men and women who work here. When this happens to them, they are exposed to bio-hazardous material that could not only cause infection but also is one of the most degrading things that could ever happen to a human being. Also, the Female staff is exposed to inmates who openly masturbate to them. They are basically sexually assaulted daily. Mental Health chalks this kind of lewd and disgusting behavior up as a "mental illness". So the female staff that work here are subjected to having to pass by cells on the tier to do the checks while inmates masturbate to them openly. They are degraded every day and the courts do absolutely nothing to these inmates other than charge them with a misdemeanor. More than half of all the inmates that are housed in P.S.U. are "staff assaultive". That means the officers who work in this environment are under the constant pressure of being assaulted every day they come to work! On top of all of this, they have to deal with inmates who go "suicidal". They have to sit on watch and make sure the inmate does not hurt himself. And they have to do all of this while performing the normal duties everyday such as serving food, showers, passing out mail, escorting inmates back and forth to group, yard, etc..... So it would be easy in the culture we are in where we blame law enforcement for everything. I am an inmate who is housed in this environment - and as much as I would like to blame everything on the prison guards, the facts and the truth is they are not to blame. I have been treated with respect and professionalism while housed here. I have seen most of the inmate population in P.S.U. disrespect the staff here and constantly manipulate to get something they

want from them. Inmates light the materials in their cells on fire in order to get what they want. Are there bad influences on both sides? yes. But for the most part, if you do your daily program as an inmate here - you will be left alone and be treated with respect. That is the truth. Hector Martinez was not neglected by the officer's who work here - he was neglected by the mental health staff that work here!

I only knew Hector Martinez for 10 days, when he first arrived at P.S.U. I knocked on my wall and asked him if he wanted some coffee and a stamped letter to write his family. It is a custom with those who have been in prison as long as I have (23 years) to be curious to your neighbors and offer them something when they first arrive because when you first get to P.S.U. you have no property. Having a stamped envelope ~~of~~ and some paper to write your family and let them know you have arrived is vital to establishing contact. He declined both. I introduced myself and let him know if he needs something, just ask. I noticed the next couple of days he was declining his meal trays and not going out to shower or yard. This caused me to check to make sure he was ok. So I would knock on the wall a couple times a day to talk. We can communicate through the power socket on the wall. It's easy to hear each other. I do not recall much of what we talked about - he did mention that he had a visit coming that weekend. I did as well. As the days went on, I noticed that he was being "non-responsive" when the officer's came around to do their checks. I would call over and ask him if he was ok - he would respond by saying, "yes". I got him to go to the exercise cages one day. But when we got out there, he just sat on the ground and just enjoyed the fresh air - no talking. The day of the visit came and he went out at around 10:00 AM Sunday Morning JUNE 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017. When I returned from



the visit, I knocked on the wall and asked him how his visit went? He said it was good. But I noticed that when I came back I looked into his cell and he had the lights out. It was the middle of the day. So I offered him the radio that I had in my cell - if he wanted to listen to the radio. When most people are depressed in here, they have their cell lights off in the middle of the day. Now I want to tell you that all these days that Hector was being non-responsive, there were calls being made to mental health ~~to~~ by custody staff to have someone come and talk with Mr. Martinez - to no avail. The whole ten days, I did not see any mental health staff talk to Mr. Martinez. Obviously there were big "Red Flags" being displayed on his part that something was wrong. Later that night, around 2:00 AM on Monday June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I heard a loud noise - like something falling to the ground. It woke me up out of a dead sleep. The inmate who lives downstairs heard it and woke up too. I said, "did you hear that?" He confirmed the same loud noise. I knocked on the wall and tried to ask Hector if he was alright. But I got no response. That morning, the officers came to his door to feed him breakfast and he was non-responsive (as usual). I cannot say for sure that he was dead at the same time that they offered him his breakfast tray because I cannot see into his cell from inside my cell. I remember calling over there a few times with no response. But this was also normal behavior for him. The officer's came by all day doing checks. The afternoon arrived and it was shower time. The officer on the next shift came by to do showers and came to my door and said, "East, what's up with your neighbor?" He pulled me out for a shower and I looked in the cell and seen Hector lumped over against the toilet with what looked

like to be a piece of sheet around his neck. His skin also was a bright white with a yellowish tint. In my years of being in prison, unfortunately, I have witnessed people dying, so I knew right away that he was gone. The officer looked at me and I told him that he was dead and to push his alarm. He did at once - they entered the cell and went to give him medical attention. Mr. Martinez had been dead for hours already. His body was already stiff. That's what happened. The people from "Coleman" came by to do an investigation and I met with some representatives from Sacramento and let them know what I saw. Mr. Martinez was neglected and left in that cell to die. What happened to him was wrong and the mental health staff let him down here. The fact that the guards did checks once every 20 minutes all day while his lifeless body lay on the ground is a problem as well. But to their credit, inmates will often sleep on the ground in their cells and also ~~fake~~ "fake" suicides. So the amount of training that the officers receive in order to deal with an inmates mental health condition is not sufficient. But yes, he was dead in that cell for hours. How long he was dead I don't know. It could have been since 2:00am the previous morning or sometime during that day - but I do know it was long enough for the body to become stiff.

About two months ago, I cut myself really bad and almost died in my cell. I am diagnosed with Bi-polar disorder. Sometimes I become really manic where I stay up for days at a time. Because of sleep deprivation I experience delusional behavior (hearing voices, seeing things, etc...) This is usually the time I end up cutting myself. The last incident (Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> 2018), I was found laying on the floor in a pool of blood (approximately 4 liters) and unconscious. I had cut a main artery in my arm and had to be rushed in a ambulance ~~to~~ to the hospital.

6

I receive emergency surgery to repair the artery and 56 stitches in my arm. This has happened to me numerous times. I am afraid that one day I will end up killing myself. This last incident happened because I received a letter that my mother had just experienced another stroke. It caused mania and eventually becoming suicidal where I wanted to end my life. I have struggled being separated from my family and being sent to prison's down south - this has contributed to violent behavior on my part that almost ended the lives of two other inmates. I do not claim to be a victim of circumstances - I am responsible for my behavior. But my family is a big contribution to me rehabilitating in prison. I have two consecutive life sentences so I will never get out of prison. But it is important to me to still be a part of my families lives and getting visits. So, yes, I have experienced suicide five separate times and have just been fortunate to not have succeeded. I need to get treatment for my mental disorder but the fact is there is no treatment being offered here at this institution. The staff who hold P.H.D's and Psy.D's are doing absolutely nothing to help the numerous inmates here like me who have severe mental illness. CDCR has contracted with the Psychologists who work here to pay off all of their student loans if they come to work here for 5 years. That means the thousands of dollars that are accumulated in student loans to receive a P.H.D are payed off in the name of "Rehabilitation". "See, we are rehabilitating all these inmates by offering them top of the line mental health treatment by hiring P.H.D's and Psy.D's" when in reality - these people have the incentive to work here to get their student loans payed off! And guess who foots that bill? Yep - the taxpayers! If you challenge that what I am saying is true or not - ask for an audit. That means hundreds of thousands of dollars are being payed off in student loans by the taxpayers without their knowledge. Meanwhile, the "treatment"

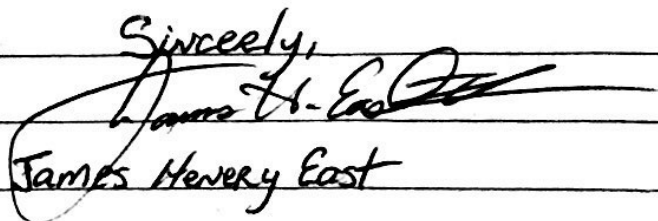


we receive here is going down to a room with cages while we sit there and play board games and listen to music. Sure, the group says, "Anger Management". So on paper it looks like we are being offered "Anger Management" classes to deal with our mental health. But in reality, it is nothing but a lie. I almost killed myself and when I returned from the hospital I asked them to help me and this is what "treatment" they offer? So the normal citizen is under the notion that we are being rehabilitated in here and receiving mental health treatment and in reality none of that is true.

Inmates have conflicting opinions about the "Guard One checks". I, for one, have not experienced any negative affects such as sleep deprivation. The guards that have to walk in the middle of the night usually make sure they are cautious and not make any noise. Some inmates are ~~are~~ annoyed with the checks, some are not. I assume that the guards hate it. Every 20 minutes they have to walk the tiers and "beep" every door. Has it been effective at reducing the number of suicide attempts? Probably not. Each time the guards go by the device makes a "beeping" sound when they contact a point of your door. Most guards do not even look into the cell because they have become accustomed to passing by without looking. This is because they get tired of the constant barrage of questions being asked as they walk the tier each time - "what time is it?" "Did they pass out sheets?" "where is dinner?" etc. ... And they also deal with numerous inmates who tell them they have "chest pain's" or "suicidal". Custody staff will pull the inmate out of their cell and take them down to medical or to be evaluated by a Psychologist - only to have them sent back to their cell numerous times. This has gone on for years at a time until they get sick of being manipulated and eventually stop listening. In a case like mine, when (or if) they see blood or cuts on my arm, they immediately pull me out. This is because it is an

act of "self-harm". I hope I am painting an accurate picture for you - all of these factors have contributed to people (inmates) who really need mental Health treatment being neglected. ~~XXXXXX~~ In the case of Hector Martinez, he was neglected and left to die in a cell because of everything that goes on in a place like this. Can people do a better job? Yes. But until "Mental health" actually becomes mental health, those inmates who cause all of the problems will continue to contribute to the deaths of more inmates. And the mental Health staff needs to offer treatment and not give refuge to others who have disciplinary problems. I have wrote letters to people in charge here because of this and addressed all of these issues with no response. I have made suggestions and asked for help - that's all I can do. I don't want to die as a result of receiving no treatment for my illness.

Well, I hope I have been helpful in you writing an article about inmate suicides. There will be those who will doubt my credibility because of my criminal past - I don't care one way or the other. I'm going to spend the rest of my life in here either way. My only motivation for writing to you is to give Hector's family an accurate account. I am sorry this happened to him and I wish I could have done more to save him from ending his life. He was not old enough to go yet. I know he had people who loved him and cared for him. It is sad. Thank you for writing to me. Make sure you send me a letter back A.S.A.P so I know my letter reached you OK? I will go for now.

Sincerely,  
  
 James Henry East



James East #H-65031  
SP-SAC / A2-201  
Box 290066  
Sacramento, Ca.

95671

Prison Generated Mail  
CSP-SACRAMENTO



Jason Fagone  
The San Francisco Chronicle  
901 Mission Street

San Francisco, Ca.

9410332334 0024

94103